

Bell County Master Gardener
Tip of the Week
By Mary Lew Quesinberry

Time to Prepare for Summer

Bell County enjoyed a cool, moist spring and now that summer is near, we have chores to do to keep our landscapes looking their best. The seedpods of Bluebonnets and poppies have dried and the plants can be removed from the garden and added to the compost area. The seed of Bluebonnet and poppies can be dispersed now. This will give the hard seed coat time to break down and germinate in the fall. Dianthus, columbine and Gregg's Blue Mist can be deadheaded and trimmed back.

Remove all dead looking foliage. Get aggressive with *Salvia greggii* and trim one third off of the top. You will be rewarded with a plant full of blooms in about three weeks.

Spring blooming shrubs like *lorepetalum* and Indian Hawthorne can be pruned now. Spanish lavender can be cut back by one third after its blooms start forming seed heads. Spring blooming climbing roses can be pruned after they have finished their bloom. Deadhead roses, zinnias, petunias, and marigolds to keep them blooming. Trim flame acanthus back one third to keep it bushy and to get it ready for its hot weather bloom period.

Hand weed the vegetable garden and use mulch to help control weeds and to reduce watering needs by 25%. Handpick garden pests or remove with high-pressure water spray. Dr. Doug Welch, extension horticulturist at Texas A&M, recommends the organic neem oil to control persistent garden pests. Keep the garden watered, harvested, and organic matter turned into the empty rows to prepare them for the fall garden.

Fertilize lawns with high nitrogen fertilizer and water one inch a week. A rule of thumb is to fertilize Memorial Day, July 4th, and lastly Labor

Day. Avoid weed and seed products as they can damage landscape plantings. Mow often and raise the mower height to 2 inches for

Bermuda, 4 inches for St. Augustine and 6 inches for Buffalo.

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com

Bell County master gardeners are taking applications for the next class starting January 2013. The all-inclusive fee is \$250.00

Applications can be downloaded from the website or picked up at the AgriLife Extension Office, 1605 North Main, Belton, Texas. [254-933-5305](tel:254-933-5305).



In the photo: Texas Bluebonnet seed can be distributed now for next spring's bloom. It will take most of the summer to wear down its hard seed coat. When the temperature, light, and water needs are met the seeds will germinate in the fall and will start blooming in March.